



# Economic Development Commission

## SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

**Wednesday, March 22, 2023 | 6:30p.m.**

*Note: This meeting was held at 40 Old Farms Rd and via Zoom*

### **I. Call to Order**

Interim Chairman M.Clark called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

#### **Members Present:**

B.Rankin  
S. Hills  
C.Mitchell  
M.Clark

### **II. Public Participation**

J.Taraskiewicz addressed the EDC about her support for the Gateway Signage project the Commission was working on. She also stated that she felt that some of the unspent ARPA funds should be spent on things that beautify the Town. She further spoke to three town-wide events that the Library would be hosting over the next several months in celebration of their 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, including a dinner/dance in April, a family picnic in June and an open house in the Fall.

N.Tell spoke to a property on River Rd North of the Park that is currently owned by Northeast United Soccer and the potential for a project there. He stated his thoughts and suggestions pertaining to the idea of utilizing the existing rail line as a commuter railway and suggested the EDC participate in discussions with the Hall Foundation about re-use of the Hall Memorial School if the referendum were to pass.

### **III. Approval of Minutes**

a. February 21, 2023

M.Clark made a motion, second by S.Hills to approve the minutes as presented.

*All in Favor. Motion Passes Unanimously.*

### **IV. Commission Business**

#### **a. Strategic Plan Project Scope**

The Commission held a general about the Strategic Plan and the major goals to be achieved by the project. The Commission reviewed an outline that had been prepared by M.Clark that could be incorporated into the Request for Proposals. The main focus of this plan will be to find overlap between what the community wants and what the market will support. The Plan will also include financial projections for the Town down the road based upon various potential development scenarios. The Commission reviewed various public engagement strategies for this plan, including community surveys and meetings. M.D'Amato explained to the Commission that the ARPA Commission had also recently approved up to \$50,000 to be used by the Town for a Facilities Study and that the findings within that study could also help inform this plan. He further explained that based upon the various tasks the EDC was going to be looking to

include in this Plan, it may be more beneficial to bid out the specific subtasks individual vs. the entire plan as a single project to attract more specialized bidders. B. Rankin spoke to the initial joint meeting that was held with the Planning & Zoning Commission pertaining to the Strategic Development Zone and how this Plan was important to the re-writing of that regulation. The EDC agreed that they would review the outline prepared by M.Clark and that J.Guszkowski would start to prepare a potential bid document for their review at the April meeting. S.Hills also indicated that she would reach out the Uconn School of Public Policy to see if there were any partnerships that could be made with policy students looking for internships that could assist with some of the data review.

#### **b. Welcome to Willington Signage**

The EDC discussed the findings of the survey that had been conducted and the next steps for the project. They agreed that M.D'Amato and J.Guszkowski would work to prepare bid specifications for their review at the April meeting so that they could begin to solicit proposals from sign companies.

#### **c. Business Outreach**

M. D'Amato updated the EDC on the work being performed in the office to prepare an updated Business List that included the previous business list, the BRIG Grant recipients and the most recent Personal Property Declaration List from the Assessor. He indicated he would provided that list to the EDC when it was completed. The EDC discussed outreach efforts and M.Clark stated that he would like each member to perform direct outreach to local businesses. The EDC agreed they would work to prepare a list of questions that each member could ask during these meetings. They further discussed additional outreach efforts to increase public visibility such as holding events within commercial buildings or areas or attending Willington Day.

#### **d. Upcoming Meeting Date**

The EDC reviewed that their next meeting would be Wednesday, April 26<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm.

### **V. Reports/Correspondence**

None

### **VI. Public Participation**

R.Tulis provided his thoughts the Commission pertaining to public outreach and surveys, and the challenges associated with trying to encourage the uses that the community may indicate they "want". He spoke to the history the retail uses and their lack of viability in Willington which he offered was largely related to Willington residents not supporting these uses. He further spoke to the current SDZ zone and some of the constraints with the various design development zones in our current regulations.

E.Newcomb: addressed the Commission and asked for clarification as to where the EDC was going to solicit proposals for the construction of the gateway signage. She also spoke to what the signs would say and suggested potential community surveys could be distributed with tax bills.

M.Pelletier spoke to the Commission and provided his thoughts on what he thought residents and people moving to Willington are looking for in the community. He stated that the Commission should be looking to diversify Willington's tax base to prepare the Town to be more resilient. He suggested the EDC enter into a discussion with other Towns for perspective, and suggested the Towns of Mansfield, Tolland or Ellington. He further stated that we should try to market ourselves to UConn and the population center associated. He stated that a commuter rail in Wilington would be a great

way to market the community and provide something in a way that is unique. He felt that the EDC should also reach out to existing businesses to see if there was an appetite for any of them to further expand within Town. Lastly, he suggested that the Town engage the residents and have a competition to design the content for the sign.

N.Tella addressed the EDC regarding his concerns for any type of warehousing uses in Willington. He spoke to the vacant building across the street from the Mill and suggested an easement for access to could be pursued to make ingress/egress easier. He stated that per the EDC's Development Guide, perhaps working to try and facilitate a gym or other fitness use with Northeast United Soccer could be pursued.

M.McKinnon: Stated that as the Chair of Willington Day they would love to have the EDC participate in the event.

L.Miner spoke the Commission and stated she thought a lumber yard or hardware store might be appropriate and would thrive. She also stated a gym perhaps with a pool would be well received.

## **VII. Adjournment**

M.Clark adjourned at 8:36pm